



Sweden

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2001](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 4, 2002

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The King is Chief of State. The Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, exercises executive authority. The Government respects the constitutional provision for an independent judiciary in practice.

The Government maintains effective control of the police, all security organizations, and the armed forces. The police provide internal security and the military provide external security.

The country has a total population of approximately 8.89 million, and an advanced industrial economy, mainly market based. Citizens enjoy a high standard of living, with extensive social welfare services. The per capita gross national product during the year was \$26,057 (44,557 CHF).

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. There were infrequent reports of the use of excessive force by police. There were some violent clashes between police and protesters during the year. The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women and abuse of children. Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation was a problem.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents during the year.

In June 2000, a police officer was charged with breach of duty, serious ill treatment, and causing the death of another in a March incident in which he shot a fleeing suspect. In October the policeman was sentenced to 18 months in prison; he was fired in November. Also in June 2000, a prison escapee died after being caught and restrained by four prison guards. The guards were suspended pending the results of a police investigation into the death. One guard was charged with manslaughter and was awaiting trial at year's end.

In June 2000, the Minister of Justice decided to appoint a commission of inquiry to look into past deaths in custody in order to propose safeguards. NGO's remained very interested in such cases.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, there were infrequent complaints of the use of excessive force by the police, although there is no evidence of a systemic problem. Police officers found guilty of abuse typically

were suspended, resigned, or otherwise were disciplined.

Violent clashes between police and protesters at some demonstrations in Malmo and Gothenberg during the year resulted in some injuries and complaints of excessive police violence (see Section 2.b.). Investigations were ongoing at year's end.

Skinhead and neo-Nazi related violence increased during the year (see Section 5).

Prison conditions generally meet international standards. Men and women prisoners are held separately. Juveniles are held separately from adults and convicted criminals and pretrial detainees are held separately.

The Government permits visits by independent human rights monitors, although there were no such visits during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the Government generally observes these prohibitions. The law requires warrants for arrests. The police must file charges within 6 hours against persons detained for disturbing the public order or considered dangerous and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. The law requires arraignment within 48 hours. The time between arrest and the first court hearing may be extended to 96 hours for detainees considered dangerous, likely to destroy evidence, or likely to flee. In cases involving more than one individual and in the case of foreigners, courts may order continued detention for 2 weeks at a time while the police conduct investigations. Such detentions can be protracted, particularly in drug cases. Detainees routinely are released pending trial unless they are considered dangerous. Bail does not exist. If a person files for bankruptcy and refuses to cooperate with an official investigation, a court may order detention for up to 3 months, with judicial review every 2 weeks.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and the Government does not employ it.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government generally respects this provision in practice.

The judicial system is composed of three levels of courts: District courts; a court of appeals; and a Supreme Court. All criminal and civil cases are heard first in district court regardless of the severity of the alleged crime.

The Constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforces this right with vigor. Trials are public. Defendants have the right to appeal and are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits such actions, and the Government generally respects these prohibitions in practice. The law limits home searches to investigations of major crimes punishable by at least 2 years' imprisonment, and the authorities generally respect this provision. In general the police must obtain court approval for a wiretap and a prosecutor's permission for a search; however, a senior police official may approve a search if time is a critical factor or the case involves a threat to life. The national police and the Prosecutor General's Office submit a report to Parliament each year detailing all of the electronic monitoring done during the previous year.

In 2000 the Minister of Justice presented a proposal to expand the use of police listening devices and other electronic surveillance. According to the proposal, listening devices and other electronic surveillance would be allowed only if serious drug crimes or serious crimes that would result in at least 4 years' imprisonment were suspected. Under continued pressure from NGO's, the Government continued to rework its proposal.

Under the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization thousands of persons were forcibly sterilized between 1934-76. The majority of those sterilized were persons with mental or physical disabilities. In 1999

Parliament decided to pay damages of approximately \$21,000 (219,905 CHF) to each victim. By October 2000, 1,925 persons had applied for compensation. By year's end, 2,067 persons had applied for compensation, and approximately 1,566 had received payment. The Government allocated additional resources to pay compensation since the number of applicants far exceeded expectations.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, rightwing groups are not permitted to display signs and banners with provocative symbols at their rallies (see Section 5).

Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned. The Government subsidizes daily newspapers, regardless of political affiliation. There are 169 daily newspapers and 455 weeklies. Broadcasters operate under a state concession. A variety of commercial television channels (one ground-based and several via satellite or cable) and several commercial radio stations operate.

A quasi-governmental body excises extremely graphic violence from films, television programs, and videos.

Criticism of child pornography is widespread, and the debate on the legality of ownership of pornographic material continued. A 1999 law criminalizes the possession and handling of child pornography. It also is illegal to publish or distribute such material. The Queen remains a strong and popular advocate of children's rights and an active opponent of child pornography.

Access to the Internet is available widely and is unrestricted.

Academic freedom is respected.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, there were some violent clashes between police and protesters during the year. Police require a permit for public demonstrations, but the authorities routinely grant such permits, with rare exceptions to prevent clashes between antagonistic groups or due to insufficient police resources to patrol an event adequately.

In April there were violent clashes between police and demonstrators at the European Union (EU) Finance Ministers' meeting in Malmo and in June at the EU summit in Gothenburg. In Gothenburg in June, a small number of militant activists and police engaged in street battles that disrupted the peaceful demonstration of approximately 25,000 protesters. Some of the demonstrators broke windows, set fires, and hurled cobblestones at mounted police. At one point, a group of police shot at violent demonstrators and wounded three individuals. The police also raided a school suspected of housing violent activists. Approximately 120 demonstrators filed complaints of excessive police violence after these incidents. Prosecutors were investigating these cases at year's end. In September the Government appointed a committee headed by former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson to investigate police actions in Gothenburg. In October two prosecutors in Stockholm began investigating complaints against the Stockholm police; the investigation was ongoing at year's end.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government does not hamper the practice or teaching of any faith.

The country has maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax" although the Government routinely grants requests from taxpayers for exemptions. All churches receive state financial support.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government generally respects them in practice.

The law provides for the granting of refugee and asylee status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government cooperates with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The Government provides first asylum. The Government reviewed applications for asylum more thoroughly than in 2000. During the year 23,571 persons sought asylum compared to 16,303 applications in 2000. Applicants included 6,229 persons from Iraq, 3,112 persons from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 2,779 persons from Bosnia Herzegovina, 840 persons from Russia, 780 persons from Iran, and 595 persons from Afghanistan. The Government approved 10,546 applications in 2000. Approximately 11 percent of the country's population is foreign born. Applications can remain under consideration for long periods of time with applicants in uncertain status. Because of the appeals process in the courts, cases can extend for several years, although such cases are few in number.

NGO's continued to complain that the country lacks a transparent process for making decisions in asylum cases. They maintain that the asylum procedures lack rules to guide the conduct of authorities, and ensure legal protection for asylum seekers. The procedures accord great discretion to individuals in decisionmaking positions. According to NGO's, the decisionmakers use arbitrary, unspecified, and inconsistent criteria. In particular NGO's were critical of the unclear burden of proof and the lack of an appeals process to an independent court.

In November 2000, the U.N. Committee Against Torture ruled that the decisions of the Swedish Migration Board in connection with the case of an Iranian woman had constituted a violation. The Swedish authorities did not believe the woman's claim that she might be subjected to torture should she return to her home country. The country has been criticized eight times by the Committee.

The Government expeditiously returns asylum seekers from EU countries or from countries with which there are reciprocal return agreements. In most cases, persons who were returned expeditiously had passed through or had asylum determinations pending in other EU countries. In many cases, asylum seekers were deported within 72 hours of arrival, and NGO's were critical of their lack of access to legal counsel. To remedy this situation, the Government continued to experiment with pilot programs at selected border crossings to provide expeditious legal assistance.

The Government conducted a review of the countries considered to be safe for the purposes of returning asylum seekers. NGO's have raised the issue of insufficient protection for returnees to countries without a reciprocal return agreement. In September the UNHCR criticized the Aliens Appeals Board following a decision to refuse a homosexual Iranian refugee a residence permit. In 1998 the Government stated that homosexual Iranians who openly manifest their homosexuality could run the risk of judicial proceedings or persecution in their native country, thereby justifying a fear of persecution. The Alien's Appeals Board denied the Iranian man a permit on the grounds that he did not manifest his homosexuality until arrival into the country.

A total of 4,020 Kosovar Albanian refugees were granted temporary residence permits in 1999, which initially were valid for 11 months. By year's end, more than 2,500 of these refugees had been granted permanent residence, while 839 had their requests for asylum rejected. At year's end, 400 Kosovar Albanian refugees were awaiting a decision on their applications for permanent residence. The Government has accepted over 100,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The Government provides grants to Bosnians to travel to their homeland in order to determine if they wish to be repatriated. It also provides financial incentives for returnees.

In March the country joined the Schengen Group, which led to an increase in the number of asylum seekers. As a result, the Government increased the budget of the Swedish Migration Board by \$49 million to provide for the processing of asylum applications.

On July 1, a new citizen act enabling dual citizenship entered into force, which permits the possibility of a citizen having dual nationality, and makes it easier for stateless children who were born in, or entered Sweden to acquire citizenship. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. Elections to the 349-member unicameral Parliament are held every 4 years; the last such elections were held in 1998.

Women participate actively in the political process and Government. Women constituted 43.6 percent of the Parliament and 55 percent of the Cabinet. The governing Social Democratic Party largely kept its pledge to place women in half of all political appointments at all levels.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups in general operate without Government restrictions, investigating and publishing their findings. Government officials are very cooperative and responsive to their views. Several private organizations actively monitor issues such as the effect of social legislation, antiimmigrant or racist activities, and the condition of the indigenous Sami population. Government agencies are in close contact with a variety of local and international groups working in the country and abroad to improve human rights observance.

The official government ombudsmen publicize abuses of state authority and may initiate actions to rectify such abuses.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equal rights for all citizens, and the Government generally respects this provision.

Women

Violence against women was a problem. During the year 20,382 reported cases of assault against women (excluding rape) were reported, compared with 20,517 in 2000. Most involved spousal abuse. In three-quarters of the assaults, the perpetrator was an acquaintance of the victim. On average 33 murders of women and girls are reported each year, half of them by men closely related to the victim. During the year the number of reported rapes of persons over age 15 was 2,078, compared with 1,724 in 2000. The law does not differentiate between spousal and nonspousal rape. In 2000 4,825 cases of violence against women were prosecuted, as were 339 rape cases, 280 of which were sexual assaults on persons over age 15.

The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women. The law provides complainants with protection from contact with their abusers, if so desired. In some cases, the authorities help women obtain new identities and homes. The Government provides electronic alarms or bodyguards for women in extreme danger of assault. Both national and local governments help fund volunteer groups that provide shelter and other assistance to abused women, and both private and public organizations run shelters. There is a hot line for victims of crime, and police are trained to deal with violence against women. The authorities strive to apprehend and prosecute abusers. Typically the sentence for abuse is a prison term--14 months on average--or psychiatric treatment. However, women complain about short sentences and the early release of offenders.

Trafficking in women for purposes of sexual exploitation continued to be a problem (see Section 6.f.). The purchase or attempted purchase of sexual services is illegal.

The law prohibits sexual harassment and specifies clearly employers' responsibilities to prevent and, if applicable, to investigate sexual harassment in the workplace and to formulate and post a specific policy and guidelines for the workplace. Employers who do not investigate and intervene against harassment at work may be obliged to pay damages to the victim. As with other forms of discrimination, women and men may take complaints to the courts or to their unions. To combat gender discrimination in the long term, the Equal Opportunities Act requires all employers, both in the public and private sector, actively to promote equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace.

The law requires employers to treat men and women alike in hiring, promotion, and pay, including equal pay for comparable work. According to 1999 statistics, women's salaries were 83 percent of men's salaries. Adjusting for age, education, and occupational differences between men and women, women salaries average 92 percent of men's salaries. The Equal Opportunity Ombudsman, a public official, investigates complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market (see Section 4). Women and men also may pursue complaints through the courts. A third option, and by far the most common, involves settling allegations with the employee's labor union as mediator. In 2000 gender discrimination cases by 102 women and 18 men were registered with the equal opportunity Ombudsman; these cases were being processed at year's end.

All employers with more than 10 employees must prepare an annual equality plan, including a survey of pay differences between male and female employees. The equal opportunity Ombudsman reviews these plans.

During the year, the law was amended to require from every employer a survey made with a union representative analyzing wage differences. If gender is found to be the cause for a difference in salary, pay must be equalized within 3 years.

In 2000 the Government began to pay damages to the thousands of women who were forcibly sterilized between 1934-76 (see Section 1.f.).

Children

The Government is committed strongly to children's rights and welfare; it amply funds systems of public education and medical care. The Government provides compulsory, free, and universal primary school education for children for 9 years to the age of 16. It also provides free medical and dental care for all children up to the age of 16 (19 for dental care). Parents receive approximately \$1,000 per year for each child under 16 years of age. An official children's Ombudsman monitors the Government's programs.

Although the physical abuse of children appears relatively uncommon, the public and authorities remained concerned by consistent data indicating an increase in cases of abuse over the past several years. During the year the number of reported cases of abuse of children under the age of 15 rose to approximately 6,900, up from 6,600 in 2000. In addition to 327 reported cases of rape, there were 2,480 reported cases of sexual abuse of children under the age of 15 during the year. There were 2,461 reported cases of child sexual abuse and 300 reported cases of rape in 2000. The U.N. Children's Committee criticized the Government in 1998, stating that it provided less protection for the children of immigrant and disadvantaged groups. On March 29, the Government reached an agreement whereby children of illegal immigrants receive dental and health care identical to that provided to other children.

The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically in any way. Parents, teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. Children have the right to report such abuses to the police. The authorities generally respect these laws, and the usual sentence is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. However, if the situation warrants, authorities may remove children from their homes and place them in foster care. Foster parents virtually never receive permission to adopt long-term foster children, even in cases where the parents are seen as unfit or seek no contact with the child. Critics charge that this policy places the rights of biological parents over the needs of children for security in permanent family situations.

The Government allocates funds to private organizations concerned with children's rights. An NGO, Children's Rights in Society, offers counseling to troubled youngsters. The Government remained active internationally in efforts to prevent child abuse.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in the workplace, but there are no other specific laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities, although considerable efforts are made to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities. In 2000 the Parliament adopted and implemented a national plan on disability policy that provides for freedom of access and social support as basic rights for citizens with disabilities. There is an Ombudsman for disability issues. The Government provides persons with disabilities with assistance, which may include a personal assistant for persons with severe disabilities, or improvements in the workplace's accessibility to wheelchairs. Government assistance also includes services such as home care or group living. Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility, but the Government has no such requirement for existing public buildings. Many buildings and some public transportation remained inaccessible. Deaf children have the right to education in sign language. The parents of children with disabilities and workers with disabilities under the age of 65 receive financial assistance every 7 years to buy a car adapted to the person's disability.

In 2000 the Government began paying damages to thousands of persons that it forcibly sterilized between 1934 and 1976, the majority of whom were disabled either mentally or physically (see Section 1.f.).

Indigenous People

The country counts at least 17,000 Sami (formerly known as Lapps) in its population (Sami organizations place that number somewhat higher at 25,000 to 30,000). In 1993 the Government allowed the formation of a Sametinget (Sami Parliament) as an advisory body to the Government. Sami issues fall under the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Sami continued a protracted struggle for recognition as an indigenous people; historically, the Government has resisted granting the Sami such rights. For example, Sami children had no right to education in their native language until the provision of such education to immigrant group children under a 1977 law forced the Government to grant Sami at least equal treatment. As a result of such education, northern Sami dialects have enjoyed a renaissance; however, Sami dialects in the southern portions of traditional Sami lands may have too few native speakers to survive as living languages.

In 1994 the Government removed from the Sami the right to control hunting and fishing activities on Sami village lands, permitting instead completely unlimited hunting and fishing activity on all government property. Sami leaders continued to protest this change during the year.

Some Sami state that they face discrimination in housing and employment on an individual basis, particularly in the southern mountain regions. In 2000 the Government officially recognized the Sami people as a national minority.

Religious Minorities

Citizens are tolerant of diverse religions practiced in the country; however, there is limited anti-Semitism, which in the past has manifested itself in the vandalization of synagogues with graffiti and in threatening letters. There were no cases of anti-Semitic vandalism reported during the year. The Government continued to take proactive steps to combat anti-Semitism by increasing awareness of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust. For example, the Government declared January 27, the anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, as a national day of remembrance. In January approximately 50 countries attended the second annual Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.

The Muslim community received many threats following the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in September; several mosques received bomb threats, and a Muslim school in the western suburbs was firebombed on September 17; no one was injured in the attack. Police were conducting investigations at year's end.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 11 percent of Sweden's population is foreign born, with the largest groups being from Finland, Iran, and the former Yugoslavia. Crimes with racial overtones increased during the year, but only 13 percent of the racist crimes reported could be linked directly to neo-Nazis or skinheads. Violent incidents with racial overtones have averaged approximately 100 per year, although no official statistics are kept.

Most estimates place the number of active neo-Nazis at fewer than 2,000, and there appears to be little popular support for their activities or sentiments. The Government investigates and prosecutes race-related crimes, although in many clashes between Swedish and immigrant youth gangs, authorities judge both sides to be at fault. Neo-Nazi groups operate legally, but serious debate in the press continued about outlawing such groups. In 1994 a Supreme Court ruling, which stated that it may be illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia, entered into effect. Rightwing groups are not permitted to display signs and banners with provocative symbols at their rallies.

The public continued to urge a tougher stance against neo-Nazi groups. During the year, several demonstrations against violence and racism were organized throughout the country. The Government supports volunteer groups that oppose racism and xenophobia.

The Ombudsman for Ethnic Discrimination reported an increase during the year of 66 percent in the number of complaints of ethnic discrimination in the labor market; there were 274 complaints during the year compared to 164 complaints in 2000.

A 2000 law recognizes the Sami people, Swedish Finns, Tornedal-Finns, Roma, and Jews as national minorities. The Government supports and protects minority languages.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law entitles workers to form and join unions of their choice, and workers exercise this right. In December the work force consisted of approximately 4.38 million persons, of which approximately 80 percent was unionized. Career military personnel, police officers, and civilian government officials, as well as private sector

workers in both manufacturing and service industries, are organized. Most business owners belong to counterpart employer organizations. Unions and employer organizations operate independently of the Government and political parties (although the largest federation of unions has always been linked with the largest political party, the Social Democrats).

The law provides for the right to strike, as well as for employers to organize and to conduct lockouts. Within limits protecting the public's immediate health and security, public employees also enjoy the right to strike. The Government generally respects these laws in practice. In March two legal strikes and one illegal strike were reported.

Unions have the right to affiliate with international bodies. They are affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Trade Union Confederation among others.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides for collective bargaining, and workers exercise this right. Cooperation between management and labor tends to be excellent and nonconfrontational. Labor and management, each represented by a national organization by sector (for example retailers and engineering industries), negotiate framework agreements every 2 to 3 years. More detailed company-level agreements put such framework agreements into effect at the local level. New framework agreements were signed during the year, resulting in a 3 percent wage increase per year for 3 years in most cases. Most agreements with labor unions provide for a degree of individualized pay, including merit bonuses.

The law provides both workers and employers with effective mechanisms for resolving complaints. The vast majority of complaints are resolved informally. The law protects union officials and members from dismissal or reprisals for official union activities. In some instances, unions even demand collective agreements regardless of the views and union status of employees. In 2000 a government agency, the National Mediation office, began working to strengthen the system of public mediation.

Agreements were reached in 1997 between 12 employer associations and 8 unions representing 800,000 manufacturing employees on steps to prevent strikes and lockouts, such as requiring serious wage negotiations to start 3 months before a collective agreement expires and appointing a mediator if an agreement has not been reached after 2 months. Similar agreements were signed in the municipal sector, in the retail-commercial, and service sectors.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor; however, women were trafficked to the country for the purpose of prostitution (see Section 6.f.).

The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and there were no reports that such practices occurred.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The law permits full-time employment at age 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 years may work part-time or in "light" work with parental permission. Union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively enforce these restrictions.

The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and there were no reports that such practices occurred (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages are set by collective bargaining contracts, which nonunion establishments usually observe as well. Even the lowest paid workers are able to maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families through substantial benefits (such as housing or daycare support) provided by social welfare entitlement programs.

The standard workweek is 40 hours or less. Both the law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. For workers not covered by a labor agreement, the law stipulates a limit for overtime at 200 hours per year, although exceptions may be granted for key employees with union approval; some collective bargaining agreements put the limit at 150 hours. The law requires a rest period after 5 hours of work but does not stipulate a minimum duration; in practice it is usually 30 minutes. The law also provides all employees with a minimum of 5 weeks of paid annual leave; labor contracts often provide more, particularly for higher ranking private sector employees and older public service workers. Amendments to the labor law in 1997 made it easier for employers to hire workers for limited periods, as well as empowering local unions to agree to exceptions to last-in, first-out laws.

Occupational health and safety rules are set by a government-appointed board and monitored by trained union stewards, safety ombudsmen, and, occasionally government inspectors. These standards are very high, making workplaces both safe and healthy in general. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. An individual also has the right to halt work in dangerous situations in order to consult a supervisor or safety representative without endangering continued employment.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit specifically trafficking in persons, although traffickers are prosecuted under other statutes; however, women were trafficked to the country for prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Trafficked women in past cases, numbering 200 to 500 per year, came principally from Central Europe, the Baltic states, and Russia. There have been occasional cases of trafficked women from Colombia and Cuba. The women typically are recruited in their own countries to come and work as cleaners, babysitters, or similar employment. Once in Sweden, victims are isolated and intimidated by traffickers, and work as prostitutes in hotels, restaurants, massage parlors, or private apartments. Some reportedly were "purchased" from other traffickers and brought into Sweden. A 1998 report suggests that the problem of trafficking is more widespread than the few prosecutions indicate.

The purchase or attempt at purchasing sexual services is illegal. Law enforcement primarily uses laws against pandering and an offense called "placing in distress," which can be used in cases where traffickers lure women from other countries under false pretenses. Traffickers sentenced for pandering can face up to 6 years in prison, but most sentences are for 2 to 3 years. The Government prosecuted 11 cases against traffickers in 1998-99, which resulted in 6 convictions. All of the accused traffickers were Swedish residents with family and personal ties to Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Trafficked women in general do not receive temporary residence permits; in some cases they are deported immediately. Victims of trafficking rarely are detained; however, at times they are held for a short period prior to deportation by the police or in a camp run by the Migration Board. The Government provides funding to NGO's and international organizations that combat trafficking worldwide. For example, the Government provides funds to the Foundation of Women's Forums to combat trafficking in women in the Nordic and Baltic nations by creating interactive networks that link NGO's and research institutions that deal with prevention and the rehabilitation of trafficked women.